

Variation in Youth and Family Experiences of System of Care Principles in Community Mental Health

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Abstract : This study tested whether youth mental health care quality, operationalized as the extent to which youth and families experienced system-of-care principles in service interactions with providers, varied by level of youth need after adjusting for sociodemographic and treatment factors. The relationship of quality to clinical outcomes was also examined. Using administrative data and cross-sectional surveys from a stratified random sample of 1,124 caregivers of youths ages 5 to 20 within a statewide system-of-care, adjusted analyses indicated youths with the most intensive needs were significantly less likely to experience high-quality care (51% vs. 63%, $p=0.016$), with marked deficits on 6 of 9 items. Receipt of lower-quality care predicted less improvement in youth functioning. Despite considerable effort to develop systems-of-care for youths with the most severe mental health needs, these data suggest quality disparities remain for the most impaired youths. Policy and intervention development may be needed to improve the quality of care for this population.

Keywords : system-of-care, adherence, mental health, youth

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